

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 SIL-01 LAB-04 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 SAM-01 L-03 SP-02 /035 W

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R 271651Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7988

COMUSFORAZ LAJES FLD AZ

INFO AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

CS USAF WASHDC

MAC SCOTT AFB ILL

SECDEF WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 5053

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PFOR, MARR, PO

SUBJ: LABOR UNION RECOGNITION AT AZORES BASE

REF: (A) LISBON 4960 (DTG 221205Z JUL 76), (B) LISBON 4763  
(DTG 151206Z JUL 76)

SUMMARY: NEWLY INSTALLED MINISTER OF LABOR MARCELO CURTO RAISED LABOR PROBLEM AT LAJES WITH EMBASSY. TONE OF APPROACH WAS CONCILIATORY. EMBASSY PRESENTED VIEWS BASED ON AMBASSADOR'S RECENT VISIT TO AZORES AND HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH COMUSFORAZ AND LOCAL POLITICAL/LABOR LEADERS. CURTO RECOGNIZED THAT PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE AND THE MINISTRY OF LABOR HAD CONTRADICTORY VIEWS REGARDING WHETHER COMUSFORAZ SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE LABOR UNIONS REPRESENTING ITS PORTUGUESE EMPLOYEES. CURTO WILL SEEK TO OBTAIN A COMMON GOP POSITION. END SUMMARY.

1. ON JULY 26 MINISTER OF LABOR MARCELO CURTO TELEPHONED EMBASSY REQUESTING LABATT CALL TO DISCUSS LABOR ISSUE AT LAJES. AT MEETING, CURTO SHOWED LABATT CABLES FROM SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) AT ANGRA DE HEROISMO AND UNIONS AT LAJES, DATED JULY 21 AND 22, SOLICITING MINISTRY'S ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING FORMAL RECOGNITION  
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BY COMUSFORAZ. CURTO STATED HE PUZZLED BY U.S. OBJECTION

TO SUCH RECOGNITION AS TRADE UNIONS ARE WELL ESTABLISHED IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. ASKED WHETHER EMBASSY HAD SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW PROBLEM COULD BE HANDLED.

2. LABATT, TALKING FROM NOTES PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED WITH AMBASSADOR AND DEFATT, MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- U.S. BELIEVES SOLUTION CAN BE FOUND.
- U.S. HAS NO BASIC OBJECTION TO DEALING WITH UNIONS DIRECTLY. U.S. HAD REFRAINED FROM DOING SO TO DATE OUT OF RESPECT FOR PORTUGUESE SOVEREIGNTY. PAST PRACTICE HAS BEEN FOR PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE (PAF) TO ACT ON BEHALF OF GOP IN MATTERS RELATING TO BASE LABOR RELATIONS AT LAJES. PAF HAS MADE CLEAR TO US ITS INTENTION TO CONTINUE TO DO SO. COMUSFORAZ CANNOT UNILATERALLY DECLARE IT WILL DEAL DIRECTLY WITH UNIONS CONTRARY TO WISHES OF PAF AS THIS WOULD BE AN ASSERTION OF U.S. SOVEREIGNTY OVER BASE.
- IF GOP, EITHER THROUGH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, OR THROUGH AGREEMENT BETWEEN PAF AND MINISTRY OF LABOR, INDICATES AGREEMENT WITH COMUSFORAZ RECOGNIZING UNIONS, EMBASSY WOULD FORESEE NO OBJECTION TO COMUSFORAZ DOING SO, PROVIDING SUCH ACTION IS CONSISTENT WITH OVERALL BASE AGREEMENTS.
- U.S. IS CURRENTLY BEING GIVEN CONTRADICTIONARY INFORMATION BY MINISTRY OF LABOR AND PAF. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, WE CAN ONLY ASK THAT GOP REACH AN AGREED POSITION.

3. LABATT TOLD MINISTER THAT AMBASSADOR HAD SPOKEN WITH PS/PPD AND UNION LEADERS AT TERCEIRA ISLAND ON JULY 22/23. AMBASSADOR NOTED LARGE DEGREE OF OVERLAP BETWEEN UNION AND POLITICAL LEADERS. SEEMED APPARENT THAT MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR OCCURRED AFTER UNION AND PS SENT CABLES TO CURTO JULY 21/22. AMBASSADOR CONCLUDED FROM THESE MEETINGS THAT:

- BASIC PROBLEM IS ONE OF PROCEDURE NOT RECOGNITION. U.S. EMPLOYED WORKERS ARE BEING TOLD TO HANDLE UNION MATTERS THROUGH PORTUGUESE AIR ZONE COMMANDER. MEANWHILE, AIR ZONE COMMANDER SOMETIMES DEALS DIRECTLY WITH COMUSFORAZ WITHOUT ADEQUATE CONSULTATION WITH UNIONS. AT SAME TIME, WORKERS HANDLE SOME MATTERS DIRECTLY WITH COMUSFORAZ THROUGH CHANNEL OF ADVISORY COUNCIL. THUS AN APPROPRIATE PROCEDURAL CHANNEL NEEDS TO BE ESTABLISHED AND UTILIZED.

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- WAGES ARE NOT AN ISSUE.
- RECOGNITION OF PORTUGUESE LABOR LAW AND PRACTICE ALSO NOT AN ISSUE. POINT IMMEDIATELY AT ISSUE IS COMUSFORAZ' CONTINUED RECOGNITION OF A FEW PREVIOUSLY GRANTED PRIVILEGES TO LOCAL EMPLOYEES. INDEED, THE CURRENT REVISION OF THE LABOR REGULATIONS RESULTED IN THE WORKERS LOSING SOME PREVIOUSLY RECOGNIZED PRIVILEGES PRECISELY BECAUSE THESE PRIVILEGES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN PORTUGUESE LABOR LAW AND PRACTICE.

-- AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL WIGLEY HAD DISCUSSED SITUATION  
JULY 23 AND BELIEVE THAT A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION  
CAN BE WORKED OUT WITH GOP AND UNIONS.

-- U.S. WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF GOP LABOR DELEGATE IN AZORES  
COULD ARRANGE FOR A COMMON MEETING BETWEEN AIR ZONE COMMANDER,  
COMUSFORAZ, LABOR DELEGATE AND UNIONS WHEREBY LABOR PROBLEMS  
COULD BE DISCUSSED. THIS WOULD HAVE ADVANTAGE OF RECOGNIZING  
PORTUGUESE SOVEREIGNTY WHILE AFFORDING DIRECT CHANNEL TO  
RESOLVE LABOR PROBLEMS OF LOCAL EMPLOYEES.

4. CURTO STATED HE WOULD SEEK TO OBTAIN AN AGREED GOP  
POSITION PERMITTING DIRECT U.S. RECOGNITION OF UNIONS. HE  
WAS AWARE THAT U.S. HIRED LOCAL EMPLOYEES ALREADY HAVE  
BENEFITS NOT ENJOYED BY EMPLOYEES OF THE PAF, BUT DID NOT  
BELIEVE THIS SOURCE FOR COMPLAINT. HE ADMITTED THAT HE MAY  
HAVE DIFFICULTY IN PERSUADING PAF TO AGREE TO COMMON GOP  
POSITION ON A MATTER IN WHICH IT BELIEVES IT HAS COMPLETE  
AUTHORITY.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE SOMEWHAT PUZZLED WHY CURTO HAS GOTTEN SO  
DEEPLY INTO THIS ISSUE. IT MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH PS  
POLITICS IN THE AZORES, BUT IT IS MORE LIKELY AN EFFORT BY  
CURTO TO UNTANGLE HIMSELF AFTER ANOTHER OF HIS HASTY DECISIONS  
TAKEN IN MEETINGS WITH UNION LEADERS. HE IS CAUGHT BETWEEN  
HIS CONSTITUENCY AND THE AIR FORCE AND SEEMS TO BE APPEALING  
TO US TO BAIL HIM OUT. HE IS PROBABLY A LITTLE ANNOYED  
(IRRATIONALLY) AT US FOR CREATING THE PROBLEM BY OUR PRESENCE  
IN LAJES AND FOR GOING AROUND HIM TO THE AIR FORCE. BUT THE  
FACT THAT HE IS CONSULTING WITH US IN A CONCILIATORY VEIN IS  
ENCOURAGING FROM A MINISTER IN WHOM WE ARE NOT YET PREPARED  
TO VEST A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE. WE WILL KEEP HIM INFORMED  
AS COMUSFORAZ' NEGOTIATIONS PROGRESS.

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## Message Attributes

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